Visit from the Stars

Content warning: physical disability.

Introduction

Welcome to Visétoile, a small village near a river fork that carved out a modest valley. Flanked by two mountains, the village is relatively secluded from the rest of the world. However, what they lack in earthly contacts they make up for in galactic contacts. The legends of Visétoile, told by the village elders for entertainment and offered as words of guidance, speak of the Far Watchers, a people of galactic travelers. The tales surrounding these visitors say that they come to the village's aid in times of need and their arrival is always heralded by a bright streak of light across the night sky. Still, it has been many centuries since they gave any sign of life. Are they still watching?

This adventure is suited for an adventuring party of 4 to 6 fourth level characters. A copy of the fifth edition *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide* and *Monster Manual* are required to play.

Synopsis

Following the appearance of a bright meteor in the sky, Professor Albright Whiskers, the eccentric overseer of the local Loup Observatory, is looking for adventurers to join him on an expedition to its landing site. Convinced that it heralds the arrival of a Far Watcher, the professor leads them to the landing crater. Once there, the characters discover that some force filled the crater with a lush jungle in just a few hours' time. Navigating through the jungle, the characters realize that they are not the only ones making their way to the heart of the crater, while a storm starts brewing above their heads.

Arriving at the center, a huge egg pulsing with life force did not only attract a group of treasure hunters, but also more monstrous creations. Characters have to decide whether to team up with the treasure hunters to fight of a bigger threat, or whether they want to follow a different course of action altogether.

Adventure Background

The inhabitants of Visétoile have been telling tales of extraterrestrial visitors, dubbed the Far Watchers, for generations. They speak of humanoids in perfect harmony with nature, usually with a stronger affinity for one particular element depending on the person. In a past long forgotten, their visits were seen as a bad omen, even though they almost always, without fail, came to the inhabitants' aid. The stories are almost as varied as their abilities, but there is one thing all stories agree on. Their arrival is always heralded by a bright streak across the night sky followed by a faint earthquake.

The reoccurrence of such arrivals throughout Visétoile's history and the scientific teachings of these visitors led to the establishment of the Loup Observatory in the nearby mountains. Presently, however, no one in living memory can recall when the last galactic visit to the village occurred. Over the years the people's faith waned and the observatory fell into decay.

That is, until Professor Albright Whiskers took up residence there. Frantically searching the sky for signs of life and rambling on and on about his theories of extraterrestrial life, he manages the observatory with a fiery passion. And now that the skies lit up once again, he is ecstatic to get an expedition going.

Adventure Hooks

Characters might be interested in the professor's expedition for various different reasons.

Grandma's Stories. Growing up in the village of Visétoile, the tales of the Far Watchers have fascinated you since you were a child. Maybe, the story of one of your ancestors' interaction with a Far Watcher is passed down in your family. Alternatively, a storyteller might have piqued your interest with an engrossing tale at the local tavern.

Chasing Rumors. Every legend contains a seed of truth. You know that, but still you do not believe there is anyone watching from afar. The stories these people tell all seem so far-fetched. And yet, here you are, chasing rumors again. Could the heavenly light really be the stuff of legends?

Cult of the Watchers. To some people the Far Watchers are more than legends; they are divine beings. Their rites and relics are passed down in the Cult and they are revered as idols. As a member, or a hired accomplice, it is your duty to see if there is any truth to the claims of the professor.

Chapter 1: Welcome to the Observatory

The characters are invited to the Loup Observatory by Professor Albright Whiskers, an aged tabaxi with a snow leopard's fur and bright blonde whiskers. Unfortunately, one of his legs was disintegrated during a brutal fight with a beholder while protecting the village. Ever since he has been bound to a wooden wheelchair and the observatory has been fitted to meet his needs. In this, he is aided by his extremely smart and surprisingly caring golden-headed lion tamarin Manes.

Unbeknownst to the characters, Professor Whiskers was the last Far Watcher to arrive in Visétoile, over a hundred years ago. Initially, he chose to protect the village from the shadows, but after he lost his leg nine years ago, he decided that a more permanent residence near the village was better suited. Hence, he settled in the observatory. Now that his years of duty are coming to an end, his last task is to secure the vehicle carrying the new Watcher. However, that is a task he fears he cannot complete on his own.

The Loup Observatory

The construction of the Loup Observatory was initiated a long time ago by a Far Watcher named Enduren Fangs who taught the locals the basics of astronomy. Many decades have flown by since their departure and many new occupants have taken up residence in the Observatory over the years. The current inhabitants are Professor Albright Whiskers and his companion Manes, a golden-headed lion tamarin.

Entrance Hall

When arriving at the observatory, the characters are welcomed in the entrance hall by Professor Albright Whiskers and his golden-headed lion tamarin companion Manes. To set the scene, read or paraphrase the following:

> *As you knock on the observatory's door, adorned with a carved wolf's head above the frame, you hear the muffled sound of something rolling down a ramp, and a worn but firm voice calling.*
>
> *"Manes, can you get that?"*
>
> *You hear the door unlocking, moments before it swings open to the inside. As you peer inside, you notice a small raised platform perched atop which sits a small golden-headed lion tamarin holding open the door with its tail. From deeper within a voice calls out to you.*

"Come in, come in," a tabaxi with a snow leopard's fur and bright blonde whiskers calls out from a wooden wheelchair. "Welcome! I assume you are all here to join me on an expedition to find the landing site of the new Far Watcher?"

Professor Albright Whiskers

Professor Albright Whiskers (CG tabaxi **knight**) might seem like a jovial aged tabaxi in a wheelchair with a snow leopard's fur and blonde whiskers. In fact, though, he is a Far Watcher in disguise. In the past, the Far Watchers have operated overtly in this region for the good of its inhabitants, but in more recent years they have turned to a more secretive behind-the-curtains form of aid. They have established a permanent supervisory function close to the village and the professor is the current person filling that position. His term is nearing its end, though, and he was patiently awaiting the arrival of his successor. Until now, that is.

Traits. Professor Whiskers is a jovial fellow albeit a bit eccentric and somewhat overwhelming in his mannerisms. Upon the characters' arrival, he might try to guess where they hail from based on their scent.

Bonds. Living alone with his tamarin Manes for so long has created a deep bond between the two to the point that outsiders might suspect they even share a telepathic bond. Besides Manes, for whom he cares deeply, he feels only beholden to his kin, the Far Watchers, which brings with it a sense of duty to protect Visétoile.

Flaws. Although he means well, he can sometimes be a bit forceful in rejecting offers for help. He is convinced that he should be able to handle anything alone despite his disability. However, he will not let this stand in the way of his mission.

Combat. In combat, Professor Whiskers fights alongside the characters. However, he refuses to fight intelligent humanoids unless it is clear that a peaceful resolution is impossible. He wears plate mail and uses a greatsword or heavy crossbow. He can be represented by the **knight** stat block with the following changes. His speed is only 25 ft. and he has the additional action: ***Water Whip.*** Once per short rest, Professor Whiskers can create a whip of water. A creature that he can see within 30 feet of him must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 3d10 bludgeoning damage and is knocked prone.

Manes, the Golden-headed Lion Tamarin

Manes is a chaotic golden-headed lion tamarin (CG **baboon**) with a tendency to pull pranks as a way of saying "Nice to meet you!". Although he tremendously enjoys the company of Albright, his seclusion, both from his fellow tamarins as from other people, has led to some exotic quirks not the least of which is his love for hot cocoa. Many years have passed since meeting Albright and Manes is entering the twilight years of his life.

Traits. Manes is extremely loyal to the professor and would never leave his side willingly unless asked by Albright himself. He will play goofy pranks on visitors, but never in mean spirit. One of his favorite pranks is removing someone's belt and watching their pants drop to their ankles.

Bonds. His only bond is his profound platonic love for Albright. Sometimes it seems that he always keeps Albright in his field of vision and if he does not, his tail is touching Albright to make sure he is still there.

Flaws. Due to his deep connection with the professor, Manes tends to put Albright first and others, including himself, second no matter how unreasonable it would seem to others. It would not be the first time that Manes thinks of a way to improve life for Albright without considering the consequences for others.

Combat. In combat, Manes stays by the professor's side and acts on the same initiative right before the professor. He attacks the creature that poses the biggest threat to Albright. Manes prioritizes ending his turn next to Professor Whiskers over attacking. He can be represented by the **baboon** stat block.

Bedroom

This modest bedroom contains a plain bed for one, a crate serving as a bedside table, a cramped table filled with stacks of parchment and a simple chair, a dresser, a nest for Manes, and a large trunk. Everything in this room belongs to the professor. After welcoming the characters, the professor is gathering his things from the dresser and the trunk.

Kitchen

This kitchen consists of just an eating table with a couple of chairs, a stove, and a kitchen counter littered with dirty dishes. Most of the dishes are cups with traces of chocolate and milk. The stove was recently used and is still hot to the touch. Atop it rests a big cooking pot full of oatmeal. An empty bowl on the table indicates that the professor has already eaten, but that there is quite a bit of oatmeal left.

Astronomy Tower

The astronomy tower is accessible both by stairs and by a precarious ramp. Upon reaching the top, the center of the circular room is occupied by a huge pedestal with a hefty telescope of the mirror variety. The telescope is pointing towards the domed roof at an angle. A pulley system on the wall connects to the dome to open the roof of the tower such that the telescope can be pointed at any part of the night sky. A successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check suffices to open the dome.

Near the wall stands a table with various maps of constellations and pages of calculations detailing the positions of "wandering stars". A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals an old star chart showing constellations unlike any found in the sky here. This chart shows some constellations as seen from the home planet of the Far Watchers. This map belongs to Professor Whiskers. If asked about it, he will insist it was a gift left behind by the Far Watchers of the past. In fact, the star around which the ground beneath their feet rotates, is annotated on the chart with "LIFE" in a runic script. Only the professor can read this, but he might tell the characters if a player succeeds on a DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

Development

After allowing for enough exploration time within the observatory, Professor Whiskers declares that he is ready to embark. However, if the characters have any more pressing questions, this is the time to speak up.

Chapter 2: Towards the Landing Site

According to Professor Whiskers, the landing site of the meteor he observed is located on the east side of the mountain, the side away from the village. He warns the characters that passing adventurers have brought news of a settlement of yetis on that side of the mountain who established a small community

there in the past year. The yeti encampment is not on the way to the crater, but if the characters decide to wander off course, they might stumble upon it.

Trek to the Crater

During the descent from the observatory to the crater, player characters might ask Professor Whiskers some questions and if pressed enough, he might even tell them a story about the Far Watchers "which he heard from a storyteller in town". Alternatively, he might tell them the story of how he met Manes. The professor will answer all questions to the best of his ability. However, he will only answer questions about the Far Watchers superficially to avoid raising suspicion.

Yeti Ambush

If the player characters are not careful, they may run into a yeti ambush. At some point (DM's discretion) the characters approach a yeti lying in wait for prey. Characters with a passive Perception of 13 or higher notice the ambush from 30 feet away at which point the yeti sees the characters too. Characters with a passive Perception of 15 or higher notice the ambush from 60 feet away and can take the necessary precautions. If the characters are unaware of the yeti's presence, it initiates combat by throwing a large boulder with a +5 to hit, dealing 14 (3d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage to anyone hit. If Professor Whiskers is ever hit, you may choose to break his wheelchair's axle instead.

Albright's Stories

During their walk, Professor Whiskers may tell the characters a story if asked. He has two stories he may share. The first story is about his first encounter with Manes. The second one is about the Far Watcher Enduran Fangs and the founding of the Loup Observatory. It is advised to only spend time on one story.

Meeting Manes

> *During an arduous journey through the nearby forest lands beyond the mountain range, I came across a traveling merchant dealing in exotic animals who set up camp by the side of the road. Although his animals were carefully groomed, they seemed devoid of any liveliness, stuck in cages too small for their form. So, I decided to approach the merchant disguised as a wealthy patron.*
>
> *"Good sir," I said while I started circling his cart, "where did you find such magnificent specimens?"*
>
> *Distracted by my feigned flattery, the man started rambling about the origin of various of his animals. When I noticed Manes and saw the intelligent look in his tiny eyes, I knew I found my ally. With some simple gestures I conveyed my plan to my newfound accomplice and moved towards the merchant producing a large sapphire from my pouch that I acquired earlier as payment for a job. His eyes went wide with greed and he eagerly started inspecting it. While he was inspecting the gem, I stealthily unlocked Manes's cage and in doing so showed him how the lock worked.*
>
> *When the merchant invited me to his tent to discuss the details of our transaction, I followed him and kept him distracted until Manes finished freeing the other animals. When the merchant left the tent to get the agreed upon animals, I snuck out the back*

and left the merchant to his despair. To my surprise Manes caught up to me that evening and he has not left my side since.

Enduren Fangs and the Loup Observatory

Many centuries ago, a Far Watcher named Enduren Fangs arrived with a bright streak of red light across the sky hitting the top of a mountain. Upon impact, the top of the mountain was blown to smithereens and threatened to rain down on Visétoile. Enduren Fangs who was supposed to bring hope almost brought destruction instead.

However, Fangs had an affinity for the earth element and poured all of his strength into attracting the falling debris towards him instead. In his panic, he overdid it and was unable to dodge the debris. Breaking both an arm and a leg, his first year of service for the good of Visétoile would not be spent cracking demon skulls.

Temporarily bound to stay in the village, he devoted his energy to teaching the inhabitants the basics of astronomy. To honor and thank him for the knowledge they gained, the observatory was constructed in the spot where Fangs almost doomed the village. His likeness was carved in the frame above the door and this new place of learning was dubbed the Loup Observatory. His visage adorning the door still watches over the village from atop the mountain.

The Crater's Rim

At some point (DM's discretion) the characters arrive at the crater's rim. Upon arrival, read or paraphrase the following:

Before you, the huge impact crater stretches out. All along the rim and within, the overwhelming sight of lush vegetation in lively green colors fills your entire field of view. The crater is filled by a jungle teeming with plants of various sorts, but eerily silent and devoid of all animal noises one would expect to find in such an environment.

Treasure Hunters

While making their way through the jungle, the DM may initiate a new stage by reading or paraphrasing the following:

"Hurry up!" A rough voice suddenly pierces the air somewhere to your left. "We need to get there before anyone else does! You know, first come first served! And there is only one serving."

Through the thick vegetation you see three figures cutting their way through the vines. Their features are hard to make out from here, but they sound dangerous.

"Treasure hunters," the professor whispers. "We cannot let them get there first."

Three treasure hunters named Skiv, Wade, and Saya (CN male human **veteran,** CN male dragonborn **berserker**, and CG female halfling **spy**) are making their way towards the center of the crater hoping to

find something that could be valuable to the right buyer. They are currently unaware of the characters' presence and could be surprised if approached carefully.

All three originate from a rural community of farmers. Due to a bad season and failed crops, they took up this line of more dangerous work to feed their families. They want to score this "big fish" to ward off hunger until the next spring.

Confronting the Treasure Hunters

If confronted, the treasure hunters will be quick to accuse the characters of trying to get away with all the "heavenly riches" themselves without caring about the common folk that have fallen on hard times. However, with a tall tale of the dangers ahead they might be convinced that this job is above their skill level with a DC 14 Charisma (Intimidation) check. Let the players come up with a threatening story before allowing them to make the check!

If a fight breaks out, Saya will separate her group from the player characters using her Wand of Infernal Walls (2 charges) as soon as she sees an opportunity to trap as many characters as possible. If that is not possible, Skiv and Wade try to protect the younger Saya.

If Skiv dies and the characters loot his body, they find a kid's drawing depicting a young boy that is gently pushed out of harm's way while a knightly figure with features not unlike Skiv's fights off an attacking red dragon.

Wand of Infernal Walls

Wand, uncommon

This wand has 3 charges. While holding it, you can expend 1 charge as an action to create a cylindrical wall of fire centered around a point you can see within 30 feet with a radius of 5 feet. The flames are 10 feet high and any character touching or passing through the flames suffers 7 (2d6) fire damage and 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. At the end of the user's turn, the height of the flames decreases by 1 foot. The flames are extinguished at the end of the tenth round.

The wand regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn.

Race against the Treasure Hunters

If the treasure hunters are ignored or the characters are unable to neutralize them, both teams will be trying to outrace the other.

If the treasure hunters are unaware of the characters, have the characters make three consecutive DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) checks. If the characters succeed on 2 out of 3 checks, the characters reach the center of the crater first.

If the treasure hunters are aware of the characters' presence, use the general chase rules presented in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The party that traveled the longest distance in five rounds reaches the center of the crater first.

Chapter 3: Arrival of a Far Watcher

The center of the crater features a circular clearing in the jungle with a radius of 60 feet. When the player characters reach the edge of the clearing, read or paraphrase the following:

> *As you reach the edge of the jungle, you finally lay eyes on the goal of your expedition. In the middle of the clearing rests a large egg-shaped boulder beneath a sky covered in storm clouds. Lightning strikes arc between the clouds and downwards striking all around the huge egg.*

If the treasure hunters reached the center first, also read the following:

> *While you take in this vision, you see how a lightning bolt comes rushing down to strike one of the treasure hunters. With a pained shriek, you see them falling to their knees, lifeless.*

The DM chooses which treasure hunter to eliminate. This might affect the difficulty of the final encounter.

Emerging Threat

When the characters approach the egg at the center of the crater, one **shambling rickle** per player character appears at the edge of the clearing spread out somewhat evenly along the clearing's edge. They are medium-sized heaps of clay and vegetation animated by elemental magic. They are attracted by the storm conjured up by the egg. Their goal is to reach the egg and break it open to get closer to whatever is causing the lightning storm. On their turn, they will try to focus the egg with one of their attacks and use their second attack to target anyone within reach that they perceive as a threat to them. If there is no one else in reach, they target the egg with both attacks. If they cannot reach the egg during their turn, they will try to move as close as possible to the egg and focus both attacks on one target. The egg has an AC of 18 and hit points equal to 5 x (C+1) where C is the number of player characters. The professor urges the characters to protect the egg.

At initiative counts 20 and 10, lightning strikes one random target—player character, NPC, or monster—within the clearing for 7 (2d6) lightning damage.

Shambling Rickle

Medium plant, unaligned

Armor Class: 11 (natural armor)
Hit Points: 30 (4d8 + 12)
Speed: 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR 16 (+3), **DEX** 10 (+0), **CON** 16 (+3), **INT** 4 (-3), **WIS** 10 (+0), **CHA** 7 (-2)

Skills: Stealth +2
Damage Immunities: lightning
Condition Immunities: blinded, deafened, exhaustion
Senses: blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10
Languages: None
Challenge: 1 (200 XP)

Lightning Absorption. Whenever the shambling rickle is subjected to lightning damage, it takes no damage and regains a number of hit points equal to the lightning damage dealt.

Actions

Multiattack. The shambling rickle makes two slam attacks. If both attacks hit a Small or Tiny target, the target is grappled (escape DC 13), and the shambling rickle uses its Engulf on it. If the target is Medium instead, the shambling rickle absorbs an item they are carrying in their hand, if any (escape DC 13).

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Engulf. The shambling rickle engulfs a Small or Tiny creature grappled by it. The engulfed target is blinded, restrained, and unable to breathe, and it must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw at the start of each of the shambling rickle's turns or take 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the shambling rickle moves, the engulfed target moves with it. The shambling rickle can have only one creature engulfed at a time.

Development

If the egg breaks, the storm starts to dissipate and the shambling rickles will start retreating into the jungle. If the characters let them go, proceed to the conclusion.

If all shambling rickles have been defeated, proceed to the conclusion whether the egg broke or not.

If any of the treasure hunters survived, they are easily convinced that it is in their best interest to go home.

Conclusion

Depending on how events played out, the conclusion may differ. The deciding factors are the egg and Professor Albright Whiskers.

The egg survived

Professor Whiskers survived

If both Professor Whiskers and the egg survived, the professor will tell Manes to stay, try to pull himself on top of the egg, and sit down. Raising one hand towards the lightning storm above and placing one hand on the egg, he plans on serving as a conductor for the lightning. If the characters leave him to his plan, read or paraphrase the following:

> *While the professor sits there with one hand raised towards the sky he looks at you apologetically.*
>
> *"My sincerest apologies for deceiving you," he says. "This is my final duty to the village and my people."*
>
> *As you watch, a lightning bolt arcs towards his fingertips, through his body, and into the egg-shaped structure. The professor's limp body slides down along the top of the egg while the egg comes alive. A pulse like a heartbeat fills the air around you and the storm clouds start to fade away.*

If lightning is directed into the egg, the "egg" opens at a seam and a young tabaxi with light-grey fur and golden whiskers steps out of the capsule. If you run this module as a one-shot and the professor is dead, read or paraphrase the following as the final line of the adventure:

> *"Thank you for all your help," the newcomer says emerging from the egg. "Come on, let's bury my uncle."*

If you run this module as a part of a campaign, this newcomer named Graystreak Whiskers is the new Far Watcher for the coming hundred years. He will ask the characters to help him bury his uncle Albright Whiskers and answer any questions the characters might have if they agree to help him in this. In future adventures he can serve as either a quest giver or a sidekick in the vicinity of Visétoile.

Professor Whiskers died
If the professor died, lightning keeps striking around the egg. The lightning does not strike the egg itself though. A DC 11 Intelligence (Insight) check reveals that the egg must be struck by lightning to "hatch". Any reasonable plan by the characters to achieve this may work (DM's discretion). If the egg hatches, refer to the previous section for details on how to end the adventure.

The egg was destroyed

Professor Whiskers survived
Professor Whiskers will approach the egg, peer inside through the cracks to confirm the death of the young grey-furred tabaxi inside, and drop to his knees spiritless. If engaged by the player characters, he will explain everything and point out that he needs to contact his superiors somehow. If the characters agree to help him find a way of contacting the other Far Watchers far away in space, this can be the beginning of a new adventure or follow-up session.

Professor Whiskers died
While the storm dies down, describe the desolate lightning-struck landscape and the dead bodies around the player characters. If the players decide to further investigate the broken egg, a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) or DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check to further break the egg reveals the bloodied body of a young deceased grey-furred tabaxi with golden whiskers. To end the adventure, read or paraphrase the following:

> *It seems the legends of Visétoile definitely hold a seed of truth, but the power of the Far Watchers is clearly exaggerated. Or maybe—just maybe—godlike beings sometimes need a helping hand too.*

Rewards

If this adventure is incorporated into a campaign and the egg hatched, Graystreak Whiskers offers the characters 25 gp each in addition to whatever they acquired during their journey when everything is said and done.

Credits

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Author Biography

Jordi De Jonghe spends his days as a physicist and his evenings enjoying board games, card games, roleplaying games, and the company of his friends, whenever possible. Creative outlets include writing roleplaying adventures, messing around in digital art programs and amateur board game design.

Art Credits

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